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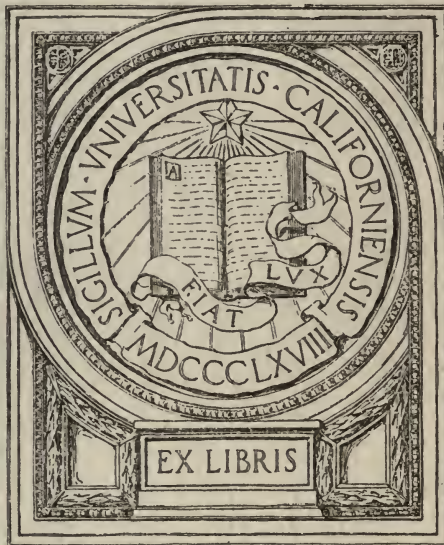


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Broken Lights

GLENN HUGHES

EXCHANGE



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BROKEN LIGHTS





BROKEN LIGHTS

A BOOK OF VERSE

BY
GLENN HUGHES

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EXCHANGE

DEPARTMENT OF PRINTING
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1920

TO MY FATHER
JOHN BAMFORD HUGHES
I AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATE
THIS BOOK

For permission to use certain of the poems in this collection, thanks are due to the Editors of *Ainslee's Magazine*, *Overland Monthly*, *American Poetry Magazine*, *Pacific Review*, *Stanford Cardinal*, *Unity*, *The Lingerer*, *Houston Post*, and *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

*Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.*

—Alfred Tennyson.

PREFACE

By time-honored tradition, the candidate in letters has established his claim to be a master of arts through the defense of a thesis built of the body of tradition and fact associated with the arts or with the performance of some particular artist. To this selected group of scholars, those creative spirits who have actually produced art themselves have from time to time been admitted, but only as honorary members. Yet, as the creation of art is at least as severe a test of culture and of refined and disciplined thinking as the ability to reason sagely upon the art created by others, the English Department of this University has come to recognize the propriety of accepting belles lettres as partial evidence of a candidate's fitness to take the master's degree in course. We are satisfied that such a departure is in the interests of the humanistic tradition, and we are happy to rest our claim to the approval of scholars at large and of the public, upon the volume of verse to which this note of explanation serves as a preface.

—FREDERICK MORGAN PADELDFORD.

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A GARLAND FOR EUTERPE



REVELATION

I never knew such power could lie
Asleep within a hand so small ;
I never knew a butterfly
Had strength at all.

For you are but a fragile thing—
You grew amid the tender flowers ;
Yet when you play, the mountains sing
Of April showers.

The stars creep closer, and the moon
Grows lustrous with a magic light ;
The birds are hushed, as though too soon
Has come the night.

I never knew that beauty bloomed
So richly in a blossom frail ;
Yet when you play, earth is perfumed,
And skies turn pale.

THE GARDENER

The gardener is a noble man ;
He dwells with flowers and trees.
He questions not God's secret plan,
But lives by what he sees.

It is enough for him that grass
Grows tenderly and green ;
That roses bloom, that seasons pass,
That rain is cool and clean.

He works from dawn till twilight hour,
And has no time for men ;
He guards the death of every flower,
And sees spring born again.

What can our sermons mean to him ?
And what our arguments ?
But empty phrases sure to dim
Sweet songs and lovely scents.

The lark is minister and choir,
The dew is holy oil ;
The sunlight is his heavenly fire,
The love of God his toil.

DEEP WATERS

My heart is like deep waters, touched by sun,
And sparkling where the eye rests, while below
Stillness presides, and the dark currents run
Mysterious courses which I cannot know.

My heart is like deep waters, filled with gloom,
Sharing the sombreness of life and death,
Touched by the silence of eternal doom,
And pulsing with the universal breath.

My heart is like deep waters—it is stirred
Not by the wind, but by the moon's pure light;
Flowing to music that is never heard,
Knowing the nameless beauty of the night.

AT THE CONCERT

This is not music :
This is remembered rapture.
Do you not feel the night
As it lies, heavy and swirling, outside these walls?
Winds are upon the sea !
In torment they struggle and lash the waves.
They cry !
And their cry is the voice of a nameless beauty
Whipped in the night.
How the pines are rushing together
In mad embrace.
They sing—sing with whispers sharp and sibilant.
Let the fire die down.
It is redder so.
Embers poised, waiting to fall,
Waiting for us to breathe.
Quiet.
We must not breathe.
We kiss, but do not breathe.
Hark ! It is only the shutters' rattle.
Or is it shadows crashing ?
Quiet. We must not breathe.

THE LOST MAENADS

Where are now the maenads, those fair women
Whose flying hair once caught the flickering sunlight
In dark Ionian groves ; whose lips were stained
Crimson and purple by the gods' own fruit ?

Alas ! thou art forsaken, Dionysus !
Hauntest thou the dim halls of the forest
In search of thy lost revellers ? Often
Dost thou pause, listening to the faint sweet strains
Of elfin music, borne on whispering winds ?

Where are the maenads, loved of Dionysus,
Wanton women of Ionian groves,
Daughters of the earth, red-lipped and white-limbed,
Dancing in the sunlight for the gods ?

CHANT OF THE VIRGIN SPIRIT

Pure am I,
Pure as fire or snow,
Pure as water trickling over moss.
The earth has soiled me never,
For I pass spirit-like through forms that hold me not.
Flower am I,
Quivering and dilating as the sun drinks from my lips.
Skylark am I,
Fled into heights of blue, dropping shrill melodies in my
wake.
Maiden am I,
Hovering by chaste fountains where dreams lurk in the cool
green depths.
My lover's name is Passion ;
It is he
Who rides like a thunder-cloud before me
And cries out
That he will crush me with embraces when the night comes.
But I elude him ; I follow him ; I slip through his arms like
magic,
Emerging breathless, unscathed, filled with ecstasy
Of triumph ; biding my time
And smiling at his pain.

STREET LOVE

You have been created goddess!
You, a girl with tender eyes;
Lips that curve in crimson beauty,
Swiftly swinging, rippling thighs.

You have been created goddess!
Can you feel the royal grace
That adorns invisibly
Maiden soul and mind and face?

You have been created goddess!
In an instant it was done;
Like the miracle of flowers
Bursting, radiant, in the sun.

Rain fell: dusk was gray and purple;
You and I passed on the street;
Strangers, then and now. Dusk deepened—
Ah! but joy is ever fleet!

You have been created goddess!
Worshipped for a single hour.
Time can scar you to the world's eyes—
But can never change that hour!

EN PASSANT

You were so wise—so lovely, too!
And I shall not forget. You knew
That life is vagrant, that it slips
Out of our fingers, past our lips
While we stand waiting. For one day
I knew you and your pretty way;
One night we watched the sea together.
Not knowing, scarcely wondering whether
Sometime we might not meet again.
There were no tears; there was no pain—
Just laughter and a hundred kisses.
I doubt if either of us misses
The other, now we're gone. Your smile
I may recall a little while;
Your eyes I can remember now,
But in a month—. I know just how
Your arms felt on my shoulder here,
But in another week, My Dear,
I shall have lost such memories.
You were so wise! You were so sweet!
Pray God that after all, we meet!

NOCTURNE

There is no need of making songs tonight,
For lovelier than song is that pure light
That lays a shimmering path across the sea,
And tips the darkening islands silverly.

Along the white-flecked margin of the shore
The rippling waves with cadenced sweetness pour,
And here beneath the moon of our delight
There is no need of making songs tonight.

IMPOTENCY

I know why lovely roses bend
In humbleness toward the earth.
I know why grasses lean and touch
The dark hillside; why cypresses
Grown stiff with age, struggle to grasp
The rocks beneath them; why the winds
Cry ever with a mournful song
Over the sea and through the land.
I know why I shall ever weep
Though proud days come, and laughter go
Beside me on swift wings of light.

There is too much of beauty left
In the great space beyond my soul—
Too full a measure for the gap
That I shall make to let it through.
Here is a thin and trembling reed
Waiting to play a symphony.
Here is my heart—against it press
The tides of beauty, coming on
In pulsing tenderness and strength,
Like seas of everlasting love,
Like seas of everlasting pain.

TO A WINTER GARDEN DANCER

What things within my memory awoke
Under the sweet persuasion of thy grace !
Thin, fragrant lines of quivering wood smoke,
Rising among the solemn Western pines ;
The flash of sunlight on the sea's blue face ;
The cool translucence of dark, mellow wines !

Once more I saw young alders springing green
Beneath a roof of cedars and of fir—
A million joyous leaves in one bright screen
That rippled softly, tenderly, and sighed
Under the kisses of the winds that stir
At mid-day where the violet shadows hide.

Again, I lay upon a certain hill,
Where golden poppies sway, lifting their lips
That swift-winged humming-birds may drink their fill,
And that the circling bee may find delight
In the transmuted sunlight which he sips
And flees with ere the dread chill of the night.

This, too, did I behold : a charmed spot
Somewhere on Earth, but not for common eyes ;
A blue, ethereal garden, long forgot
By all save poets, and perhaps the gods—
A garden by the sea, where Beauty lies
Clothed in the silks that men have wrought from
 clods.

Here is the color Love wears in her youth ;
Here is the music that men's souls obey ;
Here is the perfect symmetry of Truth ;
And with eternal smoothness, Life runs by,
Clutching at this and that, fading away—
Catching and losing that which does not die !

FENCES

Today,
On a hillside,
Where the road wound under the gnarled trees,
And the sea-wind tossed the white and purple flowers
Till they touched each other with their bending heads.
I came upon a fence,
And, thoughtless,
With a quick-impelling gesture,
As though whispering to the wind,
I leaned my arms on the brown-stained rail.
And laid my head on my hands

The sea swept out before me,
Catching the sun in its quivering waves ;
And the island-hills,
Blue folds between the sky and water,
Dreamed,
And gathered for their dreams,
Some of the iridescent mist
That haunts the ever-changing air
And dies before the sun.

These things lay there,
And yet I scarce remember them,

For sharply,
With the swiftness of sweet memories,
And catching my heart up like a pebble to be hurled
into the sea,
And yet singing to me with a divine cadence
Of blended grief and rapture,
Thy voice,
O Once and Ever Beloved,
Cried out, "I do not want you to go away!"

And I remembered
Another road on another hill,
That looked upon the sea ;
And a brown-stained fence
With arms resting on it—
White arms, white arms

I turned away quickly,
And closed my eyes,
For I knew why I had stopped there,
And I had not known before.

THE WIND

I think the wind is brother to my soul,
For when I pass from quiet house and street
Into the open spaces by the sea
Or up the storm-swept reaches of the hills,
New breath is given me---new strength of limb,
And deep out of my heart new songs arise.
The bending cypress and the quivering pine
Murmur strange words that I can understand;
The grasses stir and lift as if to speak,
And I am moved by vague, harmonious sounds
Borne whence I cannot tell. The Night is dumb,
And yet how eloquent with nameless speech!
Nothing is said, yet ah! how much I hear!
I think the wind is brother to my soul.

POST-MORTEM

White sheets are for the living, not the dead.
Oh, wind not the poor cold dead in colder white!
But rather give them to the glowing red
Of fire's caresses and their warm delight.

Sad songs are for the living, not the dead.
Oh, chant not mournfully above the tomb!
But carol some bright melody instead,
And let a dance of May dispel the gloom.

Limp flowers are for the living, not the dead.
Oh, lay not drooping rose and violet
Beside the grave, but strew the grassy bed
With apple-blossoms wild, and mignonette.

PRAYER

The wild rose blooms but for a day
Along the road in June,
And as at night I pass that way,
Beneath the silent moon,

I lift the fallen petals up
Tenderly, one by one,
And in my hands they form a cup
That one time held the sun.

The night's soft tears are on them yet,
The dawn still haunts their cheeks;
And my own face is sweetly wet
With fragrance that it seeks.

High up, with white arms in the light,
I lift them to the moon—
A perfect prayer this summer night,
Along the road in June!

THE DAFFODIL AND CROCUS
NOW HAVE COME

(To D. M.)

The daffodil and crocus now have come,
Breaking the earth with purple and with gold.
The birds that all the winter through were dumb,
Now swing among the tree-tops as of old.

The radiant snow still clothes the mountain-peaks,
But in the lowland here the warm sun gleams;
Blue seas grow sparkling, and the white sail seeks
The summer wind, mother of gentle dreams.

It is the time for laughter and a song,
While heaven is kind, and April stays a while,
And ere the tender flowers have bloomed too long,
Come back to us—with springtime in your smile!

DAY-MOON

How wan, how chill is the day-moon,
Hanging in the greyness of the eastern sky!
Celestial maiden, waiting for her lover,
Waiting for his garments to be thrown about her,
Garments of deepest dye, blazoned with stars.

Then will her passion rise!
Cloaked in those jeweled velvets, she will burn
White with a pure flame,
Mounting the heaven in her ecstasy,
And touching the world with madness
Where her light falls.

RETURN

I have thought how you would come to me,
After these days of bitter absence.

Sometimes I thought that there would be a storm,
A wind rising on the sea,
And a song of terror in the high, black trees.
You would hold me in your strong arms,
While the night raged about us,
And we would laugh, we two together, in defiance.

At other times I thought it would be morning,
With the white and quiet sunlight on the garden.
I should sit with all my gold hair down around me,
In the fragrance of magnolia and sweet lilacs.
You would come up silently behind me,
And I should know you by your kisses.

But now I think no more of these;
In my dreams there is no storm or sunlit garden,
Night and morning are alike,
For oh, Beloved,
I shall neither know nor care what lies around us,
When I see your eyes,
And hear your voice,
And lose myself, ah! gloriously,
In the deep, flame-colored rapture of your love!

MISSION CARMEL

In this still air of an October night
With the vast, star-jewelled sky bent overhead,
And voices rising, falling in the street
Where idle soldiers sit for cool and ease,
I find an old occasion slipping through
The ramparts of the busy years. I see
In flashing sunlight by the blue, blue sea,
Myself, and by me, you, both sauntering,
Slashing a roadside weed, sparing a flower,
Tossing our heads so gaily, laughing when
Our eyes met or we lacked something to say.
It was a glorious morning, filled with life,
Throbbing to music that o'erflows the world
When the gods will and man is worshipful.

We climbed the little hill. The road curved there,
Missing this tree and that, turning aside
For clumps of manzanita or a patch
Of wild hill-flowers—yellow and red and blue.
The pines gave way ; the sky broke into sight,
Shining, serene and pale above the sea.
Below, the valley, where the river runs,
Flowing in dreams until it finds the bay
And fades so peacefully into the deep
Where it is lost, and may no longer roam
Idly between the hills, among the grass.

Beside the river, ere it strikes the beach,
The Mission Carmel, standing soberly
In the quiet and unpeopled valley there.
We saw its broad roof catch the morning sun,
Saw, too, its dull scarred walls defy the breeze
Salt-laden from the sea, as it defied
All winds that blew this century and a half.
The cows grazed in the field, up to the door
And round the Mission walls; the grass stood high,
And in its depths, unseen, a bird trilled forth.

Before we moved—for we were held by charm—
The bell rang out, steady and full in tone,
While two grey pigeons fluttered from the tower
And circled in the air, then struck the roof
And settled on its ridge close side by side.

“Shall we go in to service, for a lark?”
You smiled up at me then so prettily
I couldn’t quite refuse, though I was sure
The thing would bore me, and I knew I’d make
Some awful blunder—kneel at the wrong time,
Or sit where only faithful are desired.
But still I said, “Of course, if you would like.”
And we set out.

Some folk were on their way,
Trudging with earnestness along the road

And eyeing us somewhat suspiciously
I thought. You didn't mind; women enjoy
This kind of mild adventure.

There we were,
Right up against the low, forbidding door,
Beside the rounded step, and we could hear
Murmur of voices, and an organ played
Softly, as in the dark by wandering hands.
You stopped. I waited, wondering if you, too,
Had grown a trifle frightened at the "lark."
Just then a shabby woman brushed our backs
And half a dozen scrawny children crept
Half-fearsomely into the shadowy place
Where they might look on God made tangible,
And stare with awed eyes at the muttering priest

"Well, why stop here? You're not losing your nerve?"
I was a bit sarcastic, just for show.
You shivered rather strangely, and I caught
A fleeting look of fear in your dark eyes—
I judged it fear; at any rate you touched
My arm with your white hand and said, "Let's not
Go in; I didn't understand." I laughed
But moved away with you toward the road.
"I know what we can do, now that we're here:
Climb up the outside stairs into the tower
And sit beside the bell." You smiled and said:
"Oh, lovely! That will be much nicer than—"

"Kneeling to Latin prayers in that dark place?"

"Yes, much!" You sighed, relieved.

We climbed the stairs

Even as Padre Serra must have climbed

So long ago, when Spain's imperial flag

Flew over this still valley.

By the bell,

Within the square stone belfry, we found seats

Upon a slab of rounded rock that lay

Across the arch that opened on the east.

A solemn spot—haunted by vagrant winds

And birds that nested in the crumbling beams.

Four arches framed the world: hill, stream and sea;

But to the east we looked. The valley wound

In smooth and shimmering outline through the hills,

Cradling the river; and the pines grew dark

Against the sky where hill and valley met.

The shade was deep within the tower walls,

But on the ledges and the nearby roof

Gold sunlight streamed, and bathed the ancient stones

With the soft fire of heaven.

Soon I spoke:

"How Serra must have loved to climb up here

On such bright mornings or when twilight came,

And standing here beside the friendly bell,

Look out, as we are looking, to the east,

Over the kind of peace that brings great love
And passionate beauty into all men's hearts."
"This was the mission that he loved the best."
You murmured reverently.

Then our minds
Went quickly to the work of this old saint,
And after him we thought of all such men,
(Though there be few indeed like Padre Serra)
And what they bring to pass: how churches spring,
Expand, throw myriad lines around the world,
And rule men's souls; then how they droop,
Decay and crumble like old withered vines
That lose their grasp, bear fruit no more, and die,
Fading into the dust whence once they sprang.
Your thoughts were mine—we knew each other well,
And I could follow all that passed beneath
That midnight coil of hair, behind those eyes
That sheltered such bright miracles of love.

"Is it worth while," I asked, "this losing fight;
This long heart-breaking struggle for a creed
That soon will be cast off like an old cloak?
These stolid piles of stone—artistic, yes—
But art was not their purpose; they were built
For men to gather in and learn a creed."

You answered swiftly thus: "But men are weak
And must have creeds to lean on. You know that."

"Yes, I know that. It always has been true ;
But what has been is not therefore the best
That could have been. I say, is it worth while?
A tiny flock of Spaniards held by fear,
Some dumb-eyed Indians who feel the yoke
Of strangers in the land, and know their lives
Depend on humbleness before the God
Proclaimed by their new conquerors---just that
Is what this Mission meant in Serra's day.
What does it mean today? Consider now:
A charming place where you and I may sit
Chatting bright hours away, discussing things
We know but little of ; a home for birds ;
The subject of thousand picture-cards"
I paused there, thinking what a fool I was,
Ashamed to speak with such irreverence.
A silence fell.

You hadn't moved, but sat

Staring straight out into calm loveliness.
And then you said: "It doesn't matter much
Whether men follow creeds or not, whether
They build stone churches or a theatre,
A cottage in a garden, or a ship
To ride the sea. They all are serving God
By molding their desires from plastic stuff.
This Mission never brought the world much good
Just as a church. But it is priceless, still,

Because it stands here all so quietly
Morning and night, beneath the sun and moon,
As gentle as the river flowing there,
As strong as those rocks by the point of beach.
So long as it shall stand, men coming here
Will feel a flood of love and patient strength
Submerge their hearts. And thus the past that failed
Grows potent by its human memories.
Today's work is most futile, but it is
Tomorrow's shrine. So runs the world, I think."

Again a silence. I was awed this time.
You caught my eyes and blushed, then tapped
the stone
With your gay-colored silken parasol.

After a while I found my voice, and asked:
"How did you know all this?"

You shook your head
So that a wisp of curling hair slipped down
Across your eyes. You pushed it back and rose,
Smoothing the wrinkles in your filmy dress
Down from the hips. There by the old, old bell
You hovered, all pure grace and glowing charm,
While I stayed, wondering

"Come, stupid man,
I'm going down. It's dark and cold up here."

WHEN EARTH IS SLEEPING

Lo! I have heard the apple-blossoms singing,
Singing of love for breathless summer nights,
Singing of love for gentle moonlight straying
Over the dreaming meadows sweet with dew.

The apple-blossoms sing when earth is sleeping:
Their song wakes no one save the nightingale.

GOD MADE THE DARK FOR SILENCE

God made the dark for silence. Mark the hush
That falls so swiftly on the purpling hills.
The feathery singers crouch within the brush,
Leaving but dreamy echoes of their trills.

The sea lies quiet, too, throbbing but calm ;
The wind dies with the flickering western light ;
And out of heaven a faint mysterious psalm
Rises, then fades---sung by the choirs of night.

Sound is no more. Those drooping poplars there—
Tall shadowy fingers that seek out the clouds—
Whisper no longer ; bathed by the soft air,
They merge with Silence and assume her shrouds.

REMEMBERING

(To M. H.)

When I went to the Farm last,
And shut the wooden gate upon the town,
I stopped in wonder,
For the trees
That all the winter through had stood so stark,
Now burst upon my eyes with flowering splendor,
Like a host of dancing maidens
Pink and white,
And fluttering in the freshness of the wind
With spotless and sweet-scented gowns.

By the walk,
Where it curves for the sake of the crumbling bricks
Ivy-grown, and piled in broken lines,
High-headed flowers,
Nodding, and blushing quietly,
Whispered among themselves,
And I could hear :
"There is one who should be passing by,
But we have not seen her since we bloomed.
Our red and purple and yellow-white
Must not fade out till once again
She walks this path,
And loves us as in other years."

Their voices caught upon the wind,
And the lovely blossoms of the trees
Murmured and sang; I heard them sing:
"Where are the eyes that should lift up
In radiance to watch us dance?
We cannot fall till some warm night
We feel her glance and hear her sigh,
As in those other faded years."

So went the song from lip to lip,
Among the velvet-coated folk,
Until two bright anemones
At the garden's end, lifted it up
To the blue sky,
And the remembering place
Grew sweetly loud with the soft melody.

ON LONELINESS

How lonely he who walks in dignity
Along the paths of loveliness, with pride
In love of beauty as his certain guide!
Scorning the common fetters, he is free—
Free as the lifting wind upon the sea;
Free as the skylarks when they sunward glide.
Knowing the pure, and seeing naught beside,
His is the wisdom of eternity.

The way of glory is a lonely one,
Lit by few candles, cheered by little song;
Yet there are garlands when the race is done,
And there are tears and kisses from the throng
For him who walks in silent pride, alone,
Seeking the stars, to make their light his own.

BACCHANAL

Let there be music breaking on the night
While moonlight streams among the cypresses.
Come, Love, that I may stroke thy golden hair
To the rhythm of an ancient melody.

Bring wine, bring wine! scarlet and crimson. So!
There Venus shines, silver, above the sea.
Hail, stars! dear lovely candle-lights of heaven!
Stay the grey dawn, for night is wondrous sweet!

I FLED FROM BEAUTY

The tilted crescent moon
Grew red above the sea ;
The liquid air of June
Caressed me tenderly.

The wide and darkening sky
Was edged with violet
Where mountains, reaching high,
The sun's last colors met.

Beside the crescent moon
Dipped in the blood of day,
Hung Venus, star of June,
Queen of the heavenly way.

I fled from beauty then—
Too lovely was the night !
I hid myself from men
And wept in strange delight.

DECEMBER CLOUDS

Across the house-tops, piled with white,
Across the sea, all gray and dark,
In winter's robes of sallow light,
Slowly the tireless clouds embark. .

They hang above the water's edge
In stern and ordered dignity;
They break and form an upper ledge
More sombre still. Between we see

The still and veiled white of space,
The pallid radiance of the sun .
Whose glory lingers, though its face
Points to new worlds, now the day's done.

Clouds drift, and crumble, turn to gray,
Then gather into black once more;
A tender creeping-arm of day,
Saffron and pink, starts from the shore

To climb the ominous, wind-torn walls,
But it touches the first too timidly,
And lacking¹ the strength, wavers and falls
From the ragged ramparts, into the sea.

Clouds drifting in the winter light,
Drifting into havens of mist,
Drifting into havens of night
Where winds are born, and stars have kissed.

BARS

You have no need of strength, who are so strong
Though weakness. Surely never bars of steel
Protected half so well as those frail charms
You throw about yourself. I cannot say
Just what they are; I doubt if you quite know.
Yet there you stand, wistful, alluring, bold,
A half-smile on your lips, and in your eyes
All of the lights that snare and break the heart.

To seize you by those delicate, limp arms!
To fold you in against me, feel your hair
Brush softly on my face, to meet your lips—
Ah, why can I not break this barrier down!
What is there hovers in between us so,
Like magic that the fairies make I will!
I lean to touch you. . . . There is something comes
Out of the air, out of the burning space
Beyond my finger-tips! And I must stand
Barred by that subtle force, helpless and dumb,
Like some blind child before a bolted door.

ENTRANCE AND EXIT

How quietly you stepped into my heart!
Gentler than moonlight, sudden as the sight
Of ghosts that stand beside us in the dark.
Before, all was at peace, when instantly
Music began, and flowers seemed everywhere.
I could have sworn I dreamed, yet sober Time
Lies not, and by his lips I did not sleep.

How terrible your leaving! I am torn,
Struggling with pain that somehow will not die.
Tears come and go, washing the open wounds,
But leaving salt to sting them as they heal.
The echoes of mad music taunt my soul,
And heaps of blackened flowers ensnare my feet.
Days pass . . . weeks pass . . . the sun and moon go by,
And still the pain of tearing you away
Goes on. How fast you cling! How close you grew!
Twining your silken tendrils round my life
Till it was prisoner, ignorant of its bonds,
And doomed to suffer ere it could be free.

ABSENCE

You were not there, and oh! the pain
That rose and ached within my heart.
To look upon your face again!
To see the hot blood upward start
Until your cheeks glow with its stain!

You were not there! The lights went pale,
The music died upon the air;
The laughter and the wit grew stale
Besides the keenness of despair—
Beside dear hopes grown poor and frail.

Life was a madness, joy a mask,
And merriment a fevered dream
As irksome as an endless task
Thrust on us by the gods, who scheme
To trick us out of what we ask.

You were not there! I am grown old.
The colors of the night and day
Are all the same: there is no gold;
Sunset and sea and flowered way
Blend into darkness, and are cold.

RECOMPENSE

Let the gross world go by
As it will ;
And let the sad hours die—
We have still
In spite of winged time
And despair
That which makes all things sublime,
All things fair.

Where music is, where lights
Ever burn,
Where perfumes of sweet nights
Turn on turn
Flood the earth, 'tis there the soul
Wakes and sings
Like a skylark with no goal
But swift wings.

Art is a steady light,
A sweet song,
A flower of delight
Borne along
By white hands in the dark
Toward that sea
Where all men shall embark
And be free.

DARK DOORWAYS

Where is the beauty that has fled
Down the long corridors of life,
Leaving ruin?
This woman, and others like her, once awakened
Fires that leaped in sudden rapture,
Filled men's hearts with flaming passion,
And their eyes with shooting lights
That were god-like.

O Creation!

O divine impulse that opens doors to heaven!
How unfathomable your transience is!
The tresses of this woman, with their fragrance,
The beauty of her bosom, with its whiteness,
The crimson of her cheek—

Gone, gone forever!

Through the tears that fall from eyes once filled with splendor,
Comes a faint and awful gleam of something dying.
Is it death? Or is it rather
But the passing through a dim, mysterious doorway
Into corridors where Sight and Time both vanish,
And the Soul alone may follow
In its hour of understanding?

A SONG OF PLEASANT WEATHER

The windy days are over, Love,
The sea is calm at last ;
The fields are full of quiet, Love,
As though no storm had passed.

The gentle birds of heaven, Love,
Are gliding in the sky ;
And I shall be here singing, Love,
Till thou come passing by.

UNTIL THIS HOUR

Until this hour I thought the night
Held many a lovely thing,
For I have seen the stars grow bright
And heard the sweet birds sing.

But these I have forgot at last,
And all my love is new,
For lo! the night that is so vast
Holds but the moon and you!

NIGHT VOICES

The night has lips, for in the dark
That fell about me in the silent woods,
I heard a wistful murmuring,
A faint and mystic uttering of words
That made a song.
I thought it was the flowers that spoke,
But they were all asleep;
The tender leaves hung still as death
Upon the towering trees;
It was too early for the dew
That kisses dreaming blades of summer grass.

The night has lips,
Ah, Cherished One!
It was of you they sang!
And sometime in the dark that crumples down
Out of the star-strewn heaven of the woods,
I shall translate their song
For your soul to understand.

VALUES

Our love is full of sorrow, Dearest One!
Full of the sadness of a perfect bloom,
Which, bending in the night where none may hear,
Drops tear-like petals to the silent earth.

Yet would I gladly give all lighter joys,
All quick bright laughter, and all merriment,
For one full hour of sombre loveliness
Deep in the shadowed cloister of your soul.

HOW JUNE CAME IN

How June came in I noticed well—
'Twas not with glowing sun,
But from her arms grey showers fell,
That did the hills o'errun.

Yet now June is my mistress fair ;
The rain was but a veil
To hide the blushes she did wear
Upon her cheeks so pale.

DEAD LEAVES

Walking through dead leaves,
With the wind my only fellow—
How the blood of the leaves is dried,
And turned to a ghastly yellow!

Heart of Summer is dead—
Buried in Autumn's sorrow;
And yesterday's glory yields
To the pageant of bleak tomorrow.

Walking through dead leaves,
With the ghost of Summer sighing,
And the wind my only fellow,
Singing, "Dying, all is dying!"

THE SPELL

Oh, what a night for sleep!
With the song of the summer rain,
And the cool earth-scents that creep
Past the dripping window-pane.
The smell of the garden flowers
Comes laden with moist delight,
And the magic-fingered hours
Weave sleep from the film of night.

THE TRUST

Love is a little flame.
Oh, blow it softly, softly then!
And let no wind of scorn or shame
Cut off its light from men.

Life is a darksome night.
Oh, fan love's delicate white fire!
And let no tears of bitter spite
Quench aught of its desire.

SONG OF YOUTH

Breath of the wind at sun-lit morn,
Perfume of the rose;
Smell of the sea on west-wind borne,
Hush of the bright day's close;

Path of the moon across the sky,
Light of the stars above;
Lips' caress and a maiden's sigh—
These are the things I love!

THERE WAS A TIME

There was a time when every night
My dreams were filled with you,
But since our parting, they have changed,
As dreams and all things do.

Sleep brings me now from out the deep,
Strange faces of today;
And yet there are still midnights when
All these hasten away.

I think it is when I have grown
Sick of 'the world, and sad;
Or else when sudden moonlight has
Made me divinely mad;

That out of all the silent past
There rises as of old,
The vision of your lovely face
In a light that dim stars hold.

A WOMAN'S SONG

Why did you kiss me
When the moon sank back of the island,
And the stars lay pillowed in the filmy clouds?
Was it not enough that your arms were about me,
And that your eyes were shining into mine?

You knew, Beloved, that our souls could never meet,
For the highway that you travel is not mine,
And the sun is not more distant from the earth
Than you from me.

I have lain these nights with open eyes
In the vast and terrible shadows
That surround me,
And the days, that once were gay,
Now hurt me with their brightness.

The things you told me I have forgotten,
And the warm touch of your hands I scarce remember,
But the kiss that burned my lips
Is with me ever !
And eternity is filled with an aching sadness,
And a moon that is sinking behind the island,
While the stars lie pillowed in the filmy clouds.

LIGHTS

The blue that is the hue of heaven
Glints on the valley hills,
And swift as dreams that cross the night
Are the memories it distils.

I know a light not born of sun,
Nor yet of midnight skies,
And I have seen its lustre in
The deepness of your eyes.

The blue that enfolds the valley hills
Shines with a magic grace,
But the blessed light that is in your eyes
I shall love through time and space.

RETROSPECT

God knows what dreary stretches lie
In the vast regions of my heart—
Bleak places where all flowers die,
And birds flee from the wind's keen smart.

But this I know: though desolate
Such of my heart's dark spaces be,
Fair fields there are, inviolate,
Glowing and warm with love of thee.

REPLY

"Life—what is life?" I asked the world,
The world did not reply;
Its bitter lip with scorn was curled,
And mocking was its eye.

But then you came, and now I stand
From the grim world apart;
For life was in the soft white hand
You laid upon my heart.

SONG OF SORROW

The songs I made for you are dead,
For the aching of my heart has drowned their melody.
It is the winter of our love,
And the rose leaves that were scattered in the summer
Lie black and scentless on forgotten paths.

Ah, desolate, desolate with nameless yearning
Is my heart that was so light in other days,
And somewhere in a garden,
Where a bird is singing in the sunshine
I can see you sitting, weeping,
With your gold hair all about you,
And a beautiful, deep sorrow in your eyes.

THE GREAT WISDOM

Now who shall judge of another's love?
Give ear, my friends, give ear!
Scorn not that red fire from above
Which God has planted here.

Each man is as a child before
The things his fellows do;
And it were well if he forbore
From judging false and true.

A lover knows his mistress' art,
And though the mask be thin,
He worships still with beating heart
The soul that dwells within.

God pity lovers! Were they wise
As those whose laughter sounds,
There were no witchery in eyes,
Nor magic in love's wounds.

Too harsh for beauty is the creed
That subtle critics make;
Too cheap the purpose that they read
Beneath each poor heart-ache.

Love is more wise than these: it lays
A dream on every scar,
And over human frailty plays
The soft light of a star.

REMEMBRANCES

TO A LONELY ISLAND

I know a lonely island
Beside a northern shore,
Where wind and rain and beating wave
Have ruled for evermore.

Here do the sea-birds clamor
In grey-white, whirling flocks ;
Over the surf, over the sand,
Over the naked rocks.

In pools of dark sea-water,
Left by the ebbing tide,
The starfish and the shining crab
Lie stranded, side by side.

A curving line of driftwood
Marks where the sea can reach,
And stringy heaps of drying kelp
Litter the even beach.

Back from the sea's dominion
Are wind-blown clumps of pine,
Grown thick with moss and tangled brake
And wild blackberry vine.

Here in the humid darkness
A bird sings, unafraid,
Sings to the drearest solitude,
And yet is undismayed.

O lonely, lonely island
Beside a northern shore,
May wind and rain and beating wave
Rule thee forevermore!

IF I SHOULD LIVE A HUNDRED YEARS

If I should live a hundred years
I still should think with joyous tears
Of one bright garden by the sea,
Where beauty dwelt so bounteously.

Where fox-gloves leaned above the fence,
And sweet allysum's magic scents
Lifted upon the charmed air
To woo the poppies, tall and fair.

A bank of daisies, bold and white,
Nodded and quivered with delight,
While drooping honey-suckle vines
Flooded the air with fairy wines.

No wind could pass this garden by
Without a tender, wistful sigh ;
No star could fall through skies of night
Without a wish to end its flight

Upon this spot, among these flowers,
Where God forgets to count the hours,
And where the morning dwells forever—
In dew and blossom dying never.

RAIN ON ORCAS

Rain in the islands,
With the black clouds flying,
And the last faint spots of sunlight fading on the sea.
Changing, hurrying, shifting of shadows,
And the high grey fan of rain-streaks in the east.

Darker, darker,
With the wind rising and falling more loudly in the trees,
The waves' slap sounding stronger and quicker on the sand,
Where the drift-wood,
Sad, spent, weather-weary travelers of the deep,
Lie grimly, white and naked to the rain,
When it shall come.

Swift whirr of the branches,
An audible sigh, as from the heavens,
A closing in of shadows,
And the parting flicker of white light;
Spatter on the rocks,
Steady settling-down of the ominous grey-blackness,
A strange earth-murmur of languid resignation;
From the ferns
And the hill-flowers
A soft and sleepy rustle,
As of gratified desire,
And then—the rain . . . the rain

DUALITY

Sometimes you were a woman to me, Carmel,
With odors of wild lilac in your hair,
And softest moonlight playing over you.
A gentle music rose upon your lips,
And you caressed me, charmed me into dreams.

But other times you were a strong man, Carmel,
With pine-scent and the pungent smell of earth;
A great wind played about you, and the black night
Challenged you to battle. There was sea-spray
Upon your hair I wept in silent pride.

DAKOTA NIGHT

Was ever such a night for stars
Above this silent prairie land,
Where lonely years have left their scars
In rocky buttes that darkly stand
Against the liquid film of night
So richly flecked with golden light!

There is a peace here, native, strong,
That lies upon this rolling waste
As though the gods had labored long
And, wearying, had turned to taste
The joys of dreamless sleep. No breath
Is heard. It is a peace like death.

Yet hark! A murmur on the hill!
The wind among the grasses wakes;
A cricket strums and then is still.
How sweet the music that night makes!
Starlight and quiet once again
On lonely butte and barren plain.

AT THE FAIR GROUNDS

Blue streaks hissing in the air,
Bursts of red fire on the ground ;
Zing ! of a hurtling rocket,
Plop ! when it showers fire.
Whirl of green and yellow lights
In a dazzling framework spelling WELCOME.
And everywhere on the dusty field,
Scuffling amid the peanuts and confetti,
People, open-mouthed, with eyes uplifted
To the miracle of gaudy pyrotechnics.

Later, with the rockets lying dead
Upon the prairie, and the grounds
Left littered and unpeopled, lo ! the stars !
The calm, eternal stars, set in the black vault
Of midnight, gazing down in pity and great wonder.

TUCSON

Tucson, the storied city, Old Tucson !
Where Spain first met the ancient savage race
That dwelt among these cliffs, that built upon
These barren high plateaux their dwelling-place.

This is the great memorial of a time
When intrepidity led men afar
Into the terrors of a burning clime,
Through hostile mountains toward an alien star.

A land of bronze and purple mystery,
Where sunsets linger in the fevered air,
And unreal shadows play so silently
Until the looming night falls everywhere.

The Santa Ritas with their red and gold,
The Catalinas with their violet:
What naked color! What a treasure-hold
Of wild bright beauty, in such splendor set!

Tucson, Tucson! a heritage from Spain,
With memories of ages buried deep;
This is a storied city on a plain
Enfolded by great hills where shadows sleep.

SAN XAVIER DEL BAC

A dazzling mystery in white,
A sacred dream amid the waste
Of arid desert: such a sight
As men cannot forget, despite
The great world's worry and its haste.

The Mission San Xavier del Bac
Gleams here against the monotone
Of sand and cactus and bare rock.
Here Farther Kino and his flock
Builded a shrine from mud and stone.

Above the portals and the walls
Two stately Moorish towers rise,
And from their bells go forth the calls
To prayer when purple twilight falls
And peace upon the desert lies.

The viviendas cluster near
Within the massive gates. The dead
Sleep all so safely, sheltered here
In campo santo. Roses rear
Above them bits of vivid red.

The high walls stand against the sky
Like fortresses. Here is the yard

Where cattle fed in years gone by,
Secure from prowling beast. Here lie
The ancient ploughshares, dull and scarred.

The chapel door stands open wide,
And there within that sacred place
The holy things of God abide.
Great arches rise on either side,
And heavy shadows interlace.

The altar and the reredos,
The saints in niches filled with gloom,
The sombre benches in two rows,
All covered with a light that flows
From dark-stained windows through the room.

Such colors! coral, amethyst,
Olive and jade, rich violet,
Dull red and ochre, shades of mist
Before the sun when clouds have kissed
And all their fragile beauties met.

The art of Spain, old world design,
Hewed out and painted by the hands
Of Indians whose ancient line
Goes back to days when myths entwine
With memories of primal bands.

An alien God, an alien art ;
So old to us, to them so new !
Ten thousand years they dwelt apart
Among the cliffs, in the hot heart
Of desert space beneath the blue.

And San Xavier del Bac still stands
Alone amid the wilderness,
A white and holy place. The hands
That builded it are in the sands
That hold eternal quietness.

TEXAS

This is the land of spaces, where the sky
Sweeps out and up beyond all reckoning ;
Where lustrous clouds of white in columns fly,
Like circling gulls with gleaming breast and wing.

This is the land of spaces, where the plain
Flows on until it merges with the blue ;
Where earthly measures fail, and sharp lines wane
Before the lines of heaven which shine through.

This is the land of spaces, for the wind
Breathes of an unknown haven, calm and sure—
A haven that my soul may one day find
When I am body-free and spirit-pure.

So quiet was the Sabbath day—
So bright the sun upon the hills!
Vancouver in calm beauty lay—
The beauty that the West distils.

All tranquil was the Bay's soft blue,
Save where it lapped the curving shore;
The great, dark trees were silent too—
Hushed by some wind that went before.

It was so peaceful on the street;
The sunlight lay untroubled there;
And yet one felt a far-off beat—
A strange full rhythm in the air.

The quiet broke. The sunlight flared.
Along the wide unpeopled way
A troop of soldiers Death had spared
Marched slowly out to where men pray.

Back from the reddened fields of France
These came—and as they marched along,
No word they spoke, no single glance
Threw they aside. They sang no song.

And they were proud—how greatly proud
No man could measure. They were stern—
Stern with the wisdom God allowed
To those who see Death and return.

Here was a leg gone ; there an arm ;
Another held his head awry ;
But all the terror, all the charm
Was deep within each soldier's eye.

If heaven and hell can meet on earth
And crowd together in one space,
They both were there (in lieu of mirth)
Shining and dark in each man's face.

The wrath of war, the love of land,
The kindling fires of martial pride ;
The fears and hopes of men who stand
With Horror's shadow at their side.

The music of madness and pain,
The reeling colors of the spheres ;
The parch of sun, the chill of rain,
The thrill of laughter and of tears ;

Mud, smoke, and heat—and then more mud,
A black and grey and bloody world

With men all rising like a flood
That rushed and plunged and darkly swirled.

* * * * *

So still it was ; the men had passed,
Yet from their eyes this had they told.
And now the morning sunlight cast
Shadows of blue and spots of gold.

O Soldiers that went out to pray
Beside the mountains of the West,
The British Lion stood that day
Upon the highest sunlit crest.

Over the sea his great eyes stared,
Out of the heavens came his strength ;
And his call reached men where'er they fared,
To the earth's breadth and the earth's length.

Could I forget the silent street,
With the morning light on hill and sea ;
While the quick, hushed tread of soldiers' feet
Brought God and England close to me ?

ECCENTRICITIES

ROADS TO GOD

The Christian

Out of the maze of life,
From the hand of the blessed Creator,
Come miracles of matter,
Miracles of rock and flesh and blood,
Even as stone is turned to bread,
Even as Christ is given to men.
All else is vain,
All else is filled with error.
Miracles alone, made clear to the believers,
Point the way,
Establish truth,
Express divine will here on earth,
And lead to God.

The Scientist

In the bony structure of a fish
Is told the story of creation.
In the pistils of a flower rests the true revelation.
Eyes, seek out the stars!
Mind, search everywhere in matter!
Heart, have faith, keep courage till the last!
The great adventure beckons; we respond:
We pry at the lid cautiously, surely, hopefully.
God gave us intellect,
And that is all we are sure of.

The Mystic

In the silence of eternal things,
In contemplation of the beauty of the spirit,
Is the knowledge of God.
Where darkness dwells, save for a little flame,
White and not to be touched—
There may peace be found.
Where limpid waters kiss the breast of a drifting bark,
Murmuring ceaselessly, heeding only the quiet moon,
There wisdom may be born.
Where a fragile blossom hangs on a twisted bough,
Quivering like a butterfly ensnared,
And falls, falls through waves of moonlight
To death
There may dawn the sadness which is understanding.

The Philosopher

The quest of God is the chief endeavor of men.
Do they all succeed? Perhaps.
Do they all fail? Perhaps.
Do some succeed and others fail? Perhaps.
Is there really a road to God?
Is there really a God?
Does it really matter whether there is or not?
It is all so interesting.

SANITY

If I could be entirely mad
Instead of being inclined that way,
And hindered by a common sanity,
I might amount to something.
As it is,
I merely catch a glimpse of the hidden heavens,
And barely touch a corner of the rainbow,
When I am back on earth,
Among meat-eating men,
Denying fairies and the magic of the stars.

REVERSION

The Lord of Faith I have renamed—
(Lord of our fathers' faith)
For in my heart life fiercely flamed,
Sering the older wraith.

And now there lives within my soul,
Unmarred by all without,
The Lord that makes Truth sweet and whole—
He is the Lord of Doubt.

CONSCIOUSNESS

Here am I wandering,
Like a star-chip tossed in the infinite azure;
Ever attempting to reach a haven am I,
And yet what haven I cannot know.
When I watch a raindrop melt into the sea,
Or a green leaf flutter in the summer sunlight,
I think: How calm they are! How well they
 understand their destiny!
But I
What a pitiful thing I am,
To know that I am lost, and nothing more!

THE CITY

The city is a place of wanton eyes,
Of hollow laughter and of whitened skin;
Where wolf and lamb are partners in disguise,
And Virtue walks contentedly with Sin.

LOCATION

The light of the moon is on the earth, not in the moon ;
The blush of the rose in my vision, not in the rose ;
My song is in your heart, not on my lips—
My song is in your heart !

SHROUDS

Grey skies are grey because my eyes
Have not the strength to pierce the clouds;
Dull people, too, are dull because
My eyes see but their souls' grey shrouds.

MEDITATION

I.

First, space—

Infinite and perfect:

The formlessness of beginning.

Then the stars

Sown in patterns on the finite sky.

One sphere familiar . . . earth: heavy, dark, rock-and-water sphere
whirling in an arc around the sun.

Mountains, sea-breadths, tangled tree-shapes—forms thrust upon
us who are earth-bound.

Lastly, painted lines, and colors laid in rhythm, bulks cut out of
clay, gold and silver beaten into beauty;

Forms no longer thrust upon us—

Choices!

At last, significant and joyous word of all words: choices!

II.

First, silence—

All enveloping:

Calm of the unborn cosmos.

Then a rumbling,

Crash of force on force,

Grinding of mass on mass,

Song of whirling orb,

The splash of waters,

Hiss of air,
Creeping murmur of life-birth, stir of germs.
Finally, music: sound and counter-sound,
Ordered tone and rhythm,
Telling of the soul,
Whispering of the beauty and the wonder of all things.

III.

First, unconsciousness,
Blank sterility,
The fact of being only.
Then the spark,
A tiny gleam of wondering and awakening.
The slow, slow urge to know, to grasp, to understand.
In time, words—
Many words: guesses at the Thing.
Ideas . . . sharper and sharper
Clash! white lights Joy!
Not the Thing, but a million challenges!

PRO PATRIA

AN ODE IN TIME OF RECONSTRUCTION

The blood is spilt,
The blood is dried;
From point to hilt
The sword is dyed.
O crimson river that has flowed
Through land where once the poppy glowed,
Where rose and fragrant lily bloomed,
Where late the plunging cannon boomed—
O awful stream,
Sink from our sight!
Be a mad dream
In the dark night!

For behold! out of the east is a new star born,
With manifold glories that outshine the morn;
And the star's light goes westward to a land made great
By the strong law of freedom and the downfall of hate.
By a nation's heart that loves the world,
And prizes justice more than life,
A starry banner was unfurled,
A million men thrown into strife.
The light that falls across the sea
Shines from the souls of those made free:
The Pole, the Czech, the Northern Slav,
Stand up and claim their rights as men,

And we who pledged them all we have
Shall never see them crushed again.
Out of the ruined ages rise
Before our retrospective eyes,
The glories and the vaunted claims
Of empires and undying fames.
From sleep-enfolded China gleam
The fragments of an ancient dream.
From India the prophets cry
The echoes of an age gone by.
Greece is no more---her temples stand
In ruined splendor, and the land
Of Socrates decays, though still
We nourish soul and fashion will
Upon her thrice-immortal voice.
Three hundred years ago the choice
Of grandeur fell to Britain's Isle,
And since that day there is no mile
Of trackless sea or chartless land
Unmarked by British eye and hand:
An age of coursing blood, a time
When Shakespeare prisoned the sublime.
Today, today, ah, fellowmen!
The day of glory dawns again!
The farthest west, the last frontier,
The nation bought by blood so dear—
It is her day! Arise, ye sons,
And steer the course our nation runs!

It is our day, but ah, beware
The pit of arrogance, the snare
Of narrow pride. Remember well
How Athens, Rome, and Carthage fell!
Build not, O brothers, on the pride
That shuts out vision; but abide
By all the virtues known to man.
Let not a blaring trumpet fan
The eager fires of martial lust,
Lest pomp and glory turn to dust.
Make room for love and gentleness,
For beauty that will guide and bless!
"The will to conquer" is a cry
Which dooms its votaries to die.
Prepare for change! The stubborn rock
Crumbles before the steady knock
Of moving waters. Like the sea,
Life crushes that which strives to be
Too constant, that which will not yield
To forces that the heavens wield.

We drew the blade,
We plunged it deep;
In quiet glade
The dead now sleep.
O power that drove the winning blow,
Turn back from foreign fields of woe

To vanquish in these crucial days
The foes of peace and noble ways.
God grant us heart,
God grant us sight,
To play this part,
To win this fight !

ROOSEVELT

From a puny child with poor weak eyes,
But filled with visions of the skies,
I grew to be a strong-built man
With nerve to follow any plan
My brain could hatch. I looked at life
And found that it was nine-tenths strife
And one-tenth caution; that a blow
Life understands and bends to. So
I loosed myself on western plains
Where sun and wind and driving rains
Hardened my body, steeled my will,
And taught my muscles rugged skill.

I led my riders to the war;
At San Juan Hill I climbed before
My troops, who cheered me as they came.
I added Colonel to my name.

This over, I had found for sure
That I had stuff which could endure
Battles and odds. I knew from then
My path lay straight among strong men
Who fought and conquered, right or wrong.
I loved the swift and hissing song
Of action, so I bared my arm
And struck with might my loud alarm.

I bared my arm, I bared my breast ;
I laughed to feel the burning test
Of life surge up within my heart—
I swore to God to play my part.

The world soon learned my sign; men said:
"He swings a club above his head."
I swung it—right! Sometimes I missed,
But all men heard it when it hissed.
I swung it from the White House door,
And felled my victims by the score.
The people loved me, too. They gave
All I could ask this side the grave.

I was a man of my own age.
The public didn't want a sage.
I could have been a wiser man
If I had cared to change my plan;
But I was satisfied to act,
And trust to time to prove the fact.

Don't misconstrue me—I knew well
No man who acts can safely tell
When he is right. But I knew this:
That men who think, as often miss
The just course. Life is constant change,
And luck tricks logic. It is strange,

But worth the knowing, and I knew.
I tried it out and found it true.

When I had passed my fullest day,
I swung my club from Oyster Bay.
And though the fickle world grew cold,
I clenched my teeth and kept my hold.
That thinker, Wilson, held me tight
When all the nations went to fight;
And though my heart ached for the chance,
I fought at home and not in France.
They shivered, too, beneath my blows,
And every fighting soldier knows
My spirit cheered the swaying ranks,
Though not a word of honest thanks
Came from the Democratic crew
Who steered the nation on and through.

I died when all my brain was filled
With earnest plans to shape and build
The government I loved to serve.
No man can say he saw me swerve
From any purpose, till black Death
Blew in the night with stilling breath.
I left my desk piled high with work
That only Death could make me shirk.

I am no man of action now,
For over me dead branches sough.
But I am still without regret,
For life I saw and boldly met.

A puny child with poor weak eyes,
I pulled my visions from the skies,
And with my swinging club played hell
With everything. I loved life well!

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